

Pastor's Report for January 2024 Council Meeting

For the last meeting of this Mount Cross Congregational Council, I want to lead with my thanks to each of you for serving this year! You are excellent and generous leaders who have helped our church move through the year with grace, faith, careful stewardship, and responsible oversight. God bless you.

Sadly, long-time Mount Cross member, Jo Holler, passed away on December 20. Her funeral and celebration of life will be Saturday, January 20 at 2 p.m.

Christmas Eve 2024 at Mount Cross was a joy. We held one worship service at 4 p.m. Over 230 people attended in-person. It was wonderful to have a full-to-the-brim sanctuary and lots of children to populate our live nativity scene during the Children's Message. The music was beautiful. Carol Browning continues to inspire us by bringing out the musical talents of our congregation and directing it all towards prayer and praise. Thank you also to Joe Zimmerly, Deacon Cecelia, Bill Dawson, Justin Thai, the Altar Guild, and all worship assistants and musicians for making the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve worship happen on the same day! FYI: The next time that will happen is in 2028.

I had a very relaxing and restorative vacation December 25-January 3. Thank you to Carol Browning for holding everything together and coordinating a beautiful service of Christmas Lessons and Carols on Dec. 31, thank you to Pastor Scott Maxwell-Doherty for presiding at the service, and thank you to Deacon Cecelia for doing the Children's Message and being on-call for pastoral emergencies.

Paul and I were happy to host an Epiphany party at our house on January 6. People were generous in their donations of diapers and wipes for the Redimidos/Our Saviour Lutheran Graceful Diaper Pantry in Oxnard. Mount Cross will serve at Graceful Diapers on Saturday, March 2.

Regular faith formation programs resumed the week of January 8, as did my service to the Diocese of Los Angeles on the committee to organize the annual "Diocesan Information Gathering" on March 16 and my coaching and mentoring work with Thriving in Ministry.

The Discipleship Experience met on January 14. Mid-way through the 9-month pilot program, I can say it has been successful in helping people to deepen their connections with God, one another, and the community of Mount Cross.

We have been promoting the book *Love Without Limits* by Jacqueline Bussie as an "All Church Reads" event. Allison Johnson is leading a well-attended weekly study of the book on Wednesday evenings, and all are invited to discuss the book on Sunday, Feb. 18 at 11 a.m.

The Mount Cross Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 28. We will worship together at 9:30 a.m., followed by the pot-luck and annual meeting.

Plans for the 2024 Leadership Retreat are in the works. All church members are encouraged to attend. It will be on Saturday, February 3rd from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Council members meet at 8 a.m.)

Save the Date for Ash Wednesday/Valentine's Day on Feb. 14. Mount Cross will host the service with the Three Churches (Mount Cross, Cam UMC, and St. Columba's) at 7 p.m. and help with the noon service at St. Columba's for those who prefer a day-time service.